

January 23, 2024

Jeffrey Shamas
VHB, Inc.
100 Great Meadow Road
Wethersfield, CT 06109
jshamas@vhb.com

Project: Windsor Solar One, Ground Mounted Solar Facility Located at 445 River Street in Windsor, Connecticut
Portal Filing No.: 99362
NDDDB Preliminary Assessment No.: 202307096
Expiration Date: January 23, 2025

Dear Mr. Jeffrey Shamas,

I have reviewed Natural Diversity Database maps and files regarding the area delineated on the map provided for Windsor Solar One, Ground Mounted Solar Facility Located at 445 River Street in Windsor, Connecticut. Please be advised that this is a preliminary assessment and request for additional information, not a final determination. A more detailed review will be necessary to move forward with any environmental permit applications submitted to DEEP for the proposed project. **This preliminary assessment letter cannot be used or submitted with permit applications at DEEP. This letter is valid for one year.**

According to our records there are known extant populations of the following State-listed species that occur in the vicinity of this property in habitat similar to that which appears to occur on this property.

Threatened

Hetaerina americana (American rubyspot)

Special Concern

Crocantemum propinquum (low frostweed)

Terepene c. carolina (Eastern box turtle)

Falco sparverius (American kestrel)

Critical Habitat

Sand Barren

Protection Measures for State Listed Plants and Critical Habitat

To better evaluate the property and to plan for management activities that may enhance habitat or prevent impacts to State-listed plants and invertebrate species, field surveys of the site should be performed by a qualified botanist or plant ecologist at a time of year when the above target species are detectable and identifiable. For the American rubyspot, the field work may concentrate on its host plant(s). If you need help finding a qualified botanist or plant ecologist, please contact **The Native Plant Trust** (conservation@NativePlantTrust.org) for recommendations.

A survey report summarizing the results of such surveys should include:

1. Survey date(s) and duration
2. Site habitat descriptions and photographs
3. Descriptions of the identifying characters of the target state listed plants.

4. List of component vascular plant within the survey area (including scientific binomials).
5. Data regarding population numbers and/or area occupied by State-listed species.
6. Detailed maps of the area surveyed including the survey route and locations of State listed species.
7. Conservation strategies or protection plans that indicate how impacts may be avoided for all state listed species present on the site.
8. Statement/résumé indicating the surveyor's qualifications.

Please be sure when you engage a botanist or plant ecologist to conduct surveys of this site that they have the proper experience with target plants. The site surveys report should be sent to our CT DEEP-NDDDB Program (deep.nddbrequest@ct.gov) for further review by our program biologists. Incomplete reports may not be accepted.

Program biologists will review the botanical survey report, which should include, if appropriate, the above-mentioned conservation strategies or protection plans that describe how you will protect any State-listed species found at the site from project impacts. If the report is acceptable, we will make a final NDDDB determination and provide you with a letter from our program to use with DEEP-Permits.

Protection for Vertebrate State Listed Animal Species

Falco sparverius (American kestrel) – State Special

Habitat for this bird consists of open grassy or shrubby areas with short vegetation and natural tree cavities or nest boxes for nesting. This bird returns to breed in March - July. This bird is limited by habitat in Connecticut. It can benefit from active nest box monitoring and management to decrease competition by starlings. Availability of early successional habitat benefits this species during the post fledgling period and during migration.

1. All tree clearing must be performed during the non-breeding season to prevent loss of active nests that might be present within the trees proposed for removal. Safe tree clearing dates that avoid the nesting season are from October 1st to March 1st.
2. If clearing or other site work must occur during the kestrel nesting season (mid-late March through September), a survey of the subject property for nesting kestrels will be performed beginning in mid- to late March. If nesting is observed, the nest site will be avoided until the young have fledged and left the property. During that period, a 400 foot no disturbance buffer around the nest site will be implemented to avoid disturbing the nesting birds.
3. Kestrel boxes should be installed in any remaining habitat on this site for these birds. Please contact CT Audubon or reach out to our program to provide additional contact information.
4. Limit interior and exterior night lighting. Lighting, temporary or permanent should not be directed towards suitable bat habitats. Security lighting should always be down shielded to keep light within the boundaries of the site.
5. Take steps necessary to assure that construction is designed, built, and operated in accordance with the standards and requirements of the LEED Green Building Rating System Pilot Credit #55. The USGBC releases revised versions of the LEED Building Rating System on a regular basis, and you should refer to the most current version when beginning a new building or construction project or renovation. Visit American Bird Conservancy website for more guidance:
<https://abcbirds.org/program/glass-collisions>

***Terrapene c. carolina* (Eastern Box Turtle) – State Special Concern**

Eastern box turtles inhabit old fields and deciduous forests, which can include power lines and logged woodlands. They are often found near small streams and ponds. The adults are completely terrestrial but the young may be semiaquatic and hibernate on land by digging down in the soil from October to April. They have an extremely small home range and can usually be found in the same area year after year. Eastern box turtles have been negatively impacted by the loss of suitable habitat. Some turtles may be killed directly by construction activities, but many more are lost when important habitat areas for shelter, feeding, hibernation, or nesting are destroyed. As remaining

habitat is fragmented into smaller pieces, turtle populations can become small and isolated. Reducing the frequency that motorized vehicles enter box turtle habitat would be beneficial in minimizing direct mortality of adults.

Land disturbance activities, such as constructing this new solar facility, need to consider local habitat features and apply fencing and or time of year restrictions. To protect eastern box turtle, you must consult with a qualified herpetologist to assist you with proper techniques to ensure the best protection strategies are employed for your site and the scope of this project.

If land disturbance activity will include any construction within 1,000 feet around rivers, streams and or wetlands, you will need to take precautions to avoid impacting hibernating adults. You must consult with a qualified herpetologist, with extensive experience with Eastern box turtle in Connecticut, to assess your work impact zone for the potential to impact zone. The qualified herpetologist must develop a comprehensive protection plan before work may begin on this project. The plan should include a habitat assessment, potential impacts to wintering and nesting turtles and proper protocols to protect the turtles at this project site. The plan should also provide mitigation for the loss of habitat for these turtles at this site. The plan must be sent to the NDDDB and accepted before work may begin.

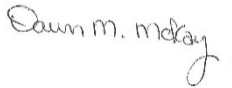
Natural Diversity Data Base information includes all information regarding critical biological resources available to us at the time of the request. This information is a compilation of data collected over the years by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Natural History Survey and cooperating units of DEEP, private conservation groups and the scientific community. This information is not necessarily the result of comprehensive or site-specific field investigations. Consultations with the Data Base should not be substitutes for on-site surveys required for environmental assessments. Current research projects and new contributors continue to identify additional populations of species and locations of habitats of concern, as well as enhance existing data. Such new information is incorporated into the Data Base as it becomes available.

Please note that if the information requested in this letter is not received by January 23, 2025, we will be unable to provide a determination. Materials already submitted will not be retained or returned. You will need to initiate a new review request by submitting a new and complete *Request for Natural Diversity Database (NDDDB) State Listed Species Review* via DEEP's ezFile Portal. For more information and guidance on submitting a request for a Natural Diversity Data Base review visit our website.

Please contact me if you have further questions at william.moorhead@ct.gov. Please be sure to also cc DEEP.nddbrequest@ct.gov with all email queries. **Please reference the filing number 99362 on all correspondence regarding this request.**

Thank you for consulting the Natural Diversity Data Base.

Sincerely,



Dawn M. McKay
Environmental Analyst 3/Biologist